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Public Hearing on the Governor's Proposed Budget

My testimony is in opposition to the proposal to eliminate funding for the Family Empowerment and Family School Connection Programs, currently funded by the Children's Trust Fund under the Department of Social Services.

My name is Philip Danforth. I am a resident of North Stonington, CT.

I support the Family Empowerment Program (FEP) that supports young fathers who are under the age of 23 years. This program works in a prevention manner to teach young fathers how to care for and nurture their new born children. **The Family Empowerment Programs that are slated for elimination are crucial components of an integrated early childhood system. Spending on human capital, especially early childhood, is one of the most effective investments a government can make.**

The FEP program has a proven record of effectively engaging young fathers in supportive services at two critical points, prenatally and soon after the birth of a child. The program not only helps them learn parenting skills, it conducts case management to help fathers establish paternity, custody orders, co-parenting plans, and financial support agreements. CT has wisely invested in FEP programs and the bottom line cost is not expensive. **This is not the time to eliminate programming for CT's underserved and vulnerable populations, young fathers and their children.**

This is a **prevention program** that provides comprehensive home visiting and support services for families whose children are frequently absent, truant, have academic or behavior problems, or often come to school unprepared. In addition, the program provides services to parents who are not adequately engaged with the school or attending to their child's educational needs. **Children who are not getting their needs met are at greater risk for developmental, behavioral and health issues – issues that too often lead to school failure.**

The goals of FSC are to improve parenting skills and help families support their child's educational success. A major role of the program is to help parents address issues that are interfering with their ability to meet the needs of the child. Cutting funding for this program will leave many families with less support and in turn will affect children's education. The program is an innovative program that supports parents and can have a positive impact on students' performance. **Cutting this program is not aligned with Governor Malloy's plan to invest in education.**

Healthy educated children grow into productive adults, contributing more to society and poses fewer burdens on public support systems than those whose early lives lack proper nurturing and support.

Please do not cut funding to Family Empowerment and Family School Connection Programs, parents and children in CT are counting on you!

Thank you for your time.

Philip G Danforth